



WHAT REALLY HAPPENED ON KILL THE BILL DEMOS

EYEWITNESS SPEAKS OUT AGAINST COPS' STORY >>Pages 2&3

YEAR ONE
WORKERS' LIVES IN
THE ERA OF COVID

>>Pages 10&11

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FIGHT POLICE AND TORY THUGS



DEFEND THE RIGHT TO PROTEST >>Pages 2&3

COUNCILS

Resist a Tory takeover in Liverpool

THE TORY government looked set to launch a takeover of Labour-controlled Liverpool City Council on Wednesday of this week.

The move would mean Liverpool council, controlled solidly by Labour for many years, would effectively be run by unelected bureaucrats on behalf of the Tories.

>>Page 6

ANTI-RACISM



PICTURE: NEIL TERRY

Hundreds of people take knee across Britain

ANTI-RACISTS across Britain came out on Saturday to show resistance to racism.

Hundreds of Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) supporters "took the knee" as part of the #WorldAgainstRacism day of action.

It showed the best way to defend the right to protest is by staying on the streets.

>>Page 4

BRITISH GAS

Crunch time looms in fire and rehire battle

THE CLOCK is ticking for British Gas workers on strike as the threat of being fired and rehired could become reality on Wednesday 31 March.

But there is no doubt that workers are still ready to strike.

>>Page 20



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'Thuggery and disorder by a minority will never be tolerated'

Priti Patel isn't describing the Tories or the police—but the protesters in Bristol

'It was a terrifying scene. It wasn't people frustrated with lack of ability to protest—this was people with a grudge against policing'

A Cop from Avon and Somerset Police doesn't know why anyone would have a grudge against policing

'They have no strategy, no connection to any real politics, it's just them taking the opportunity to express their emotions'

Bristol mayor Marvin Rees incorrectly denies the protesters were political

'It's very difficult to work because of the noise, with drums, horns and loudspeakers'

Tory MP Sir David Amess struggles to concentrate in his Parliament office so wants protests banned



KILL THE BILL PROTESTS ERUPT ON THE STREETS

Thousands of people are protesting against the Tories' crackdown and police violence, sexism and racism, reports **Sadie Robinson**

THE ESTABLISHMENT has reacted with horror to the furious protest that erupted in Bristol on Sunday.

Around 5,000 people joined a demonstration against the new Tory police bill that would make it much harder for people to protest.

The action was also driven by fury at the death of Sarah Everard, suspected to have been killed by a cop. One Bristol Live reporter said Bristol city centre was "in the control of thousands of people".

Demonstrators laid siege to Bridewell police station in Bristol, fought the cops and burned police vans. Tory home secretary Priti Patel described it as "thuggery and disorder by a minority".

Bristol Labour mayor Marvin Rees claimed the protest was "not political". It's a lie. The protest drew people from various campaigns including Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion.

The real violent thugs were the cops.

Bristol university student Faisa told Socialist Worker that she joined the protest after hearing that cops were on the attack. "I saw a tweet saying that peaceful protesters were being pepper sprayed," she said.

"Everybody keeps milking the fact that some police officers were hurt.

But lots of protesters were hurt.

"I saw three police in riot gear corner two protesters. They were hitting them with batons and throwing punches. A police woman on a horse tried to reverse her horse into protesters who were cornered.

"I saw police just provoking people in front of them. One called a girl who wasn't saying anything to them a 'fucking bitch'."

Riot police used pepper spray, batons, dogs and horses against protesters. But the mainstream media is full of denunciations of the "lawlessness" of demonstrators.

Bristol Labour mayor Marvin Rees claimed the protest was "not political". It's a lie. The protest drew people from various campaigns including Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion.

It's so important to remember how many people were peacefully protesting during the day," said Faisa. "We've been fighting all different struggles—anti-racism and anti-sexism. This bill would infringe on all of those."

She added that scenes of burning police vehicles "look dramatic". "But I think it's actually a huge under-reaction given what happened to Sarah Everard," she added. "Property is replaceable. Sarah can't be returned."

There are already calls to hound those who protested. But it's right to protest against a vicious system that spawns violence against women and then tries to block the right of people to fight back. Several other big

protests took place against the bill at the weekend, including in Brighton, Newcastle and Manchester.

More will be needed to push back the cops and defend the right to protest.

"At the end of the day, people were frustrated," said Faisa. "The government should take what happened as a warning. If they proceed to take our rights away, we will not be quiet about it."

right to protest provides a "safety valve" for anger in society.

Labour eventually opposed the bill after pressure from the streets.

But a Labour amendment, which lost, backed "the need for tougher sentences for serious crimes".

And it wanted the creation of new crimes. Giving the cops more power won't keep ordinary people safe or cut violence against women. Nearly 1,500 accusations of sexual misconduct were made against cops in England and Wales between 2012 and 2018.

Many more women will have suffered abuse at the hands of cops but not reported it, or had other complaints dismissed. Divisions at the top and the scale of opposition to the Tories mean the bill could be blocked. But the key element of opposition isn't in parliament—it's on the streets.



Manchester—power on the streets
PICTURE: NEIL TERRY

Women won't be kept safe by giving police more powers

THE TORIES' Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill passed its second reading in parliament last week. MPs backed it by 359 votes to 263. It will give cops powers to block protests that cause "serious disruption" or have a "relevant impact" on people nearby.

Some Tories and top cops oppose elements of the bill because they fear it could hurt their system. Tory Sir Charles Walker said the

right to protest provides a "safety valve" for anger in society. Labour eventually opposed the bill after pressure from the streets. But a Labour amendment, which lost, backed "the need for tougher sentences for serious crimes". And it wanted the creation of new crimes. Giving the cops more power won't keep ordinary people safe or cut violence against women. Nearly 1,500 accusations of sexual misconduct were made against cops in England and Wales between 2012 and 2018.

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Hundreds of anti-racists take the knee across Britain

At events across Britain activists gathered together to take part in the #WorldAgainstRacism day of action. Isabel Ringrose reports

ANTI-RACISTS IN towns and cities across Britain came out on Saturday to show resistance to racism.

Hundreds of Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) supporters "took the knee" as part of the #WorldAgainstRacism day of action.

In Oxford over 100 people joined three separate events despite threats from police. Campaigners and students took the knee below the statue of the racist Cecil Rhodes.

Activists then marched and sat outside the police station "against the new bill that will give police new powers to curb protests".

Around 150 campaigners gathered in Windrush Square in Brixton, south London.

They chanted, "Black Lives Matter", "No justice, no peace", and, "Say it loud, say it clear—refugees are welcome here." A list of names of those who have died after contact with the cops were read out.

Kenana from Sudan came to the protest to "support Black Lives Matter and anti-racists".

But he told Socialist Worker that he wanted to fight the Tory police bill. "This is a matter for everyone," he said.

Activists marched with drums and banners at a protest in Glasgow. They also carried banners from Love Music Hate Racism, and others calling for action over the climate crisis.

In Brighton, anti-racists joined a 1,000-strong march against the police bill and angrily demanded, "Kill the bill."

At one of three protests in Sheffield, 70 people rallied with union banners from the GMB, UCU and Unite unions and the local trades council.

Meanwhile, 30 gathered with banners outside the East London Mosque in Tower Hamlets. And outside the nearby Royal London Hospital, 20 stood with banners that read, "Keep Our NHS Public".

Around 150 rallied in Manchester, where nurse Karen Reissmann was fined £10,000 for protesting against

BACK STORY

Hundreds of people in Britain joined physical protests last Saturday against racism in society

Many speakers at the events pointed out that it is black and Asian people who are disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 virus

Protesters also made it clear that the Tory police bill will hit black and Asian people hard

the Tory NHS pay insult.

Anti-racist activist Nahella told the crowd, "They should be fining and prosecuting this government.

"They are the ones responsible for the tens of thousands of people who have lost their lives over Covid-19. And for the hundreds of deaths in police custody."

This was followed by cries of "Whose streets? Our streets."

Gathered

Over 50 assembled in both Hackney and on the Wanstead Flats in Newham, east London. And 40 gathered in Chesterfield and 60 in York.

In Cardiff and Swansea anti-racists took the knee along with the cities' football teams.

Protests also took place in

Aberdeen, Birmingham, Bristol, Bournemouth, Cambridge, Derby, Eastbourne, Gateshead, Hastings, Leeds, Liverpool, Norwich, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Tyneside, Walsall, Weymouth, Derby—and Ealing, Islington and Walthamstow in London.

In Warsaw, Poland, people formed a "human chain", connecting the state TV headquarters and the office of the European Commission.

Andy told Socialist Worker, "In this way, we expressed our opposition to the biggest racist propaganda machine in Poland—and to the anti-immigration policy of the European Union."

People gathered on the streets in several cities across Germany. Left wing Die Linke party MP Christine Buchholz said, "The racists and fascists are strong. But we can resist."



PICTURE: NEIL TERRY

Protests and rallies mark global day of action against racism

ANTI-RACIST

protests, rallies and online events were scheduled in at least 19 countries last weekend for the #WorldAgainstRacism days of action.

Events took place in Greece, France, Denmark, Norway, Turkey, Germany, Ireland, United States, South Korea, Italy, New Zealand, Canada, Portugal, Catalonia, Austria, Belgium and Netherlands.

A small group even gathered in Nizhny Novgorod in Russia.

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Parliament

Mobilisations in Catalonia in the Spanish state took place just a month after entry into the Catalan Parliament of 11 MPs of the far right party Vox.

Unitat Contra el Feixisme i el Racisme, the Catalan sister movement of Stand Up To Racism, marked the day with more than 20 events in towns and cities across the country.

Several of these were organised by new local groups that have sprung up in recent weeks in the #StopVOX campaign.

More at bit.ly/M20International



Protests in Cardiff continue

Anger towards the police continues in Cardiff

PROTESTS IN Cardiff, South Wales, continue to demand justice for Mohamud Hassan who died following contact with police.

Hundreds of protesters have taken to the streets to demand an end to racism and police brutality after Mohamud's death.

Police have arrested four of those involved in mobilisations and charged others.

They were reportedly restrained, had their homes raided and one claimed to have been beaten in the back of a police van.

In addition, a police officer previously served has received an updated misconduct notice.

Angry protests continue to oppose the police crackdown.

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Justice4Mohamud movements have successfully linked up

with women's protests. Mohamud died on 9 January after being arrested at his home in Cardiff. He was detained overnight and released the next morning and died later that day.

The Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC) said that notices of investigation have recently been served on three further police officers and one custody detention officer.

In addition, a police officer previously served has received an updated misconduct notice.

South Wales Police Chief Constable Jeremy Vaughan originally said none of his officers had "done anything wrong".

Now even the tame IOPC has served

notices on five of them. Vaughan should go and all the officers facing accusations should be suspended.

Bianca Ali from Cardiff BLM told Socialist Worker, "If it wasn't for our campaigns the IOPC wouldn't have kept investigating and no officers would be under investigation.

"Our unity has definitely scared the police. They can't sweep deaths under the rug, so they arrest us as part of their revenge campaign.

"We can't stop protesting. We need to go further than that and challenge the whole institution of the police."

The Cardiff protests must continue to stand united to fight against police brutality and repression.

Socialist Worker WHAT WE THINK

UNITE TO SMASH THE SYSTEM OF THE REAL THUGS

HERE IS a minority group of thugs in Britain that spread violence and misery. It consists of the Tories and the police. Such forces, their media friends and far too many Labour representatives rushed to condemn the furious protests in Bristol this week as being started by "thugs".

We should remember the Tories' murderous mishandling of a virus has cost the lives of almost 150,000 people.

Their solemn injunctions this week to remember the victims are nothing more than a hypocritical attempt to deflect from their failings.

As for the cops, the charity Inquest reports, "There have been 1,780 deaths in police custody or otherwise following contact with the police in England and Wales since 1990".

The rage of protesters is wholly justified—and we need more of it. It's false that taking to the streets and resisting the police weakens a campaign.

George Floyd's murder in Minneapolis would have been just another appalling statistic were it

a firm focus on action outside parliament. It means keeping up protests, and not backing off from criticism by false friends such as Starmer.

The reckoning with the Tories and the cops has to go much further than a few damaged police vans.

Working class people, especially working class black people, have been callously left to die by the Tories during the crisis.

The government praised workers for their role in holding society together. Now it tells them they have to face wage cuts, unemployment and a return to "business as usual".

Workers must use their collective power to defend the right to protest. There also has to be far more strikes to impose working class interests.

This is not a time to parrot myths about a supposedly unifying "national interest". It's time both for anger and determined organisation to fight back.

The brilliant protests over the last two weeks should be the start of a spring and summer of rage against the Tories, the cops and their entire violent system.

SECRET LOBBYISTS FOR RICH

TOP POLITICIANS have conspired to help firms drain cash from government Covid-19 loan schemes—and tried to keep it secret.

Former Tory prime minister David Cameron lobbied the British government to give Greensill Capital more access to the schemes. The company lends cash to other firms.

Lenders are not supposed to borrow money through the Covid Corporate Financing Facility. So it then successfully requested cash from the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption

Loan Scheme, with the state guaranteeing up to 80 percent of the firm's cash.

Greensill collapsed shortly afterwards, creating potential losses of hundreds of millions of pounds. Guess who will be expected to foot the bill.

Cameron became an adviser to Greensill in 2018. Records show the firm met ten times with senior Treasury officials between March and June last year.

They do not show that Cameron also personally intervened on its behalf.

Meanwhile Boris Johnson

helped the OneWeb satellite firm grab funding to stave off bankruptcy.

The British government gave £400 million to OneWeb but it wasn't enough. So Johnson met billionaire businessman Sunil Bharti Mittal last June and persuaded him to invest too.

The meeting wasn't recorded in data that lists Johnson's meetings with outside firms and interests.

Top Tories and bosses work together to squeeze as much cash as they can out of the system. Ordinary people are expected to pay for it.

Breakfast in RED

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For updates and analysis on the stories that matter go to socialistworker.co.uk/breakfastinred

ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS

EU risks lives to cut risk of losing money

UNTIL A few weeks ago the European Union (EU) was feeling pretty good. It had handled Brexit successfully. Britain failed to divide the remaining 27 member states. Brussels used its bargaining advantage to make minimal concessions to London in the tortuously negotiated withdrawal agreement and trade deal.

The pandemic hit the EU hard. But relatively prompt lockdowns and often effective track and trace policies on the continent contrasted favourably with the chaotic and murderous responses of Boris Johnson and Donald Trump.

But what should have been a moment of relief—the rapid development of effective vaccines—has seen, as the Financial Times newspaper put it, “the tables rapidly turned”. “While the UK has now administered 40.5 vaccine doses per 100 people and the US 34.1, the EU has only managed 12,” it said.

The difference comes down partly to the fact that the US and Britain are states that can mobilise resources centrally in emergencies. The successful British vaccine rollout has benefitted crucially from the centralised organisation of the NHS and the dedication of its staff.

The EU is not a state, but a cartel of nation states that have pooled some of their powers. But the biggest member states call the shots.

The European Commission (EC) exploits every crisis to increase its own powers. It seized control of the vaccine procurement programme but bungled it. It was so used to dominating its region and so blinded by neoliberal ideology that it didn’t, like other governments, hustle to get vaccines.

Moreover, as economist Paul Krugman puts it, “European officials were not just risk averse, but averse to the wrong risks.”

“They seemed deeply worried about the possibility that they might end up paying drug companies too much, or discover that they had laid out money for vaccines that either proved ineffective or turned out to have dangerous side effects.”

Haggling

“So they minimised these risks by delaying the procurement process, haggling over prices and refusing to grant liability waivers. They seemed far less worried about the risk that many Europeans might get sick or die because the vaccine rollout was too slow.”

Sluggish EU vaccinations have produced a severe political backlash. European politicians complained about the slow supply of the AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine by the Anglo-Swedish company.

This reflected the bitter hangover from Brexit. Brussels hinted that perfidious Albion had cornered an unfair share of the vaccines. Last week EC president Ursula von der Leyen threatened to ban vaccine exports. According to the Financial Times, “EU officials confirmed the move has been prompted by anger over the UK’s failure to export any finished vaccines to the EU.”

On the other hand, the most powerful member states have fed antivax fears. Both France’s Emmanuel Macron and Germany’s Angela Merkel made scientifically unjustified statements that the AZ vaccine doesn’t work for older people.

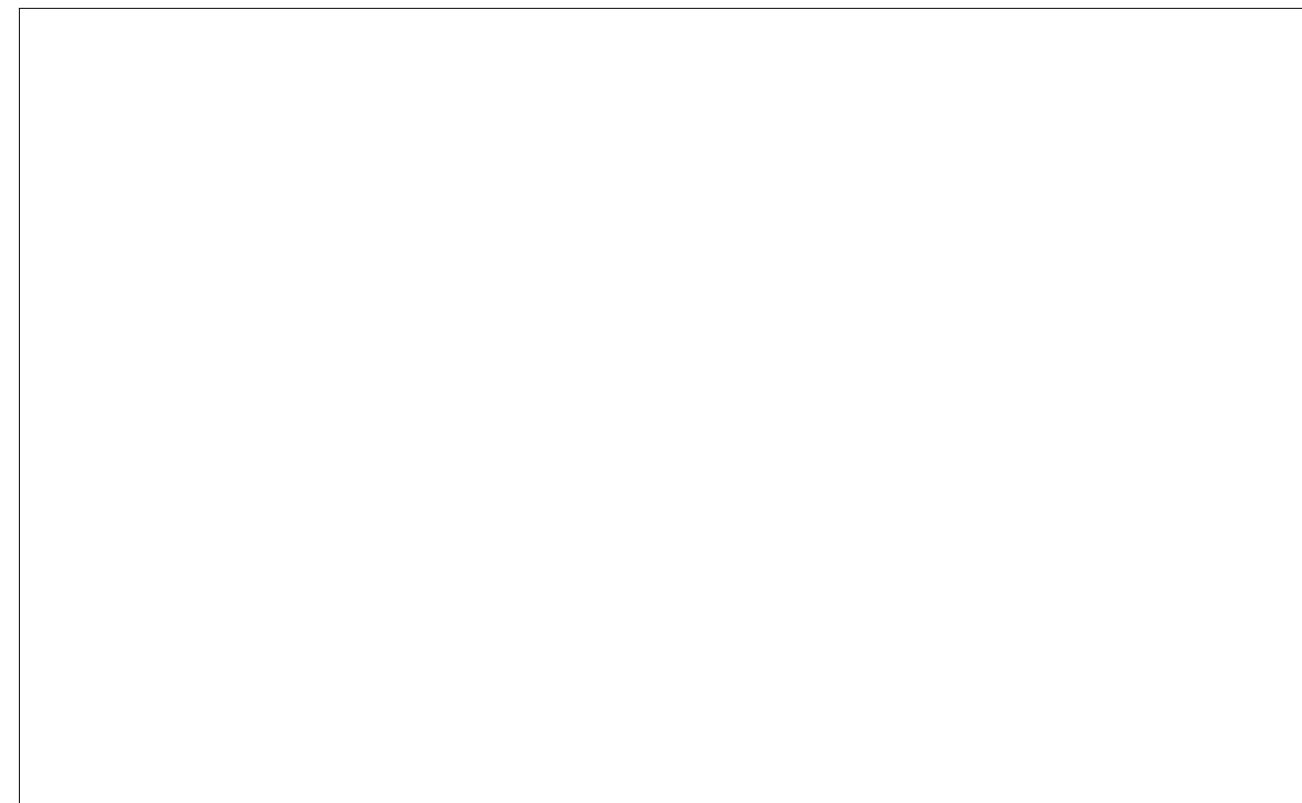
Then last week coordinated action by 16 member states led by France and Germany halted AZ vaccinations. What proved to be 30 out of five million vaccinees had suffered unusual blood clots. The European Medicines Agency insisted the benefits of the AZ vaccine greatly outweigh any side effects.

The commentator Wolfgang Münchau denounced “a politically motivated blame game”.

“EU leaders keep discrediting AstraZeneca to deflect attention from their own mistakes and to puncture the notion of a Brexit-related British success story,” he said.

Meanwhile, according to Rosa Balfour of the Carnegie Europe think tank, “Everyone’s scrambling and hoarding, hiding and blaming. Nobody’s really in control—and there’s not sufficient trust.”

This leaves the EU ill-equipped to deal with the real problem—the race between the vaccines and the new, more infectious variants of Covid-19. Infections are rising and lockdowns spreading across the continent.



FORMER LABOUR mayor of Liverpool Joe Anderson

Resist cynical Tory takeover of Liverpool City Council

by NICK CLARK

THE TORY government looked set to launch a takeover of Labour-controlled Liverpool City Council on Wednesday of this week.

The move would mean Liverpool council, controlled solidly by Labour for many years, would effectively be run by unelected bureaucrats on behalf of the Tory government.

It would be a cynical use of accusations of corruption against former Liverpool mayor Joe Anderson.

Anderson stood down as mayor after he was arrested in December last year on suspicion of bribery and witness intimidation.

The arrest was part of a police investigation into financial irregularities and the awarding of building contracts in Liverpool.

He was later bailed and denies any wrongdoing.

Arrest

Tory minister Robert Jenrick launched a government investigation into Liverpool council following Anderson’s arrest.

Jenrick has also been accused of corruption. He was embroiled in a major scandal last year after he overruled a Labour council in east London to grant planning permission to a property

developer. One “source” told the Conservative Home website that the investigation was “a once in a generation opportunity to fix Liverpool’s broken political culture”.

Jenrick asked the investigation to look into whether Liverpool City Council was complying with its “Best Value Duty”. These legal requirements enforce privatisation and austerity.

The person in charge of the investigation—Max Caller—could recommend that he or other bureaucrats be put in charge of Liverpool



Robert Jenrick

if he deems it has failed. Caller was in charge of the Tories’ investigation into Northamptonshire County Council in 2018.

He was sent in when the council declared itself insolvent after decades of government-imposed austerity. His report demanded that the council cut £124 million from its budgets until 2020—and that it then be broken up.

Overthrow

Caller was also put in charge of Tower Hamlets council in east London after producing a report that allowed the Tories to overthrow mayor Lutfur Rahman.

The Tories used accusations—based on flimsy and contested evidence, and laced with Islamophobia—to get rid of him.

Liverpool council is set to hold an election for mayor on Thursday 6 May. Labour has not yet chosen its candidate after the party blocked all three people on a shortlist drawn up by local party members in February.

But if Jenrick pushes ahead with the takeover, the mayor and the council would be powerless. Labour and trade unionists should resist the takeover with protests and strikes.

Hartlepool stitch up

LEFT WING Labour members were in uproar after party officials imposed a right wing former MP as its only choice of candidate in a coming by-election in Hartlepool.

Labour chose Paul Williams as the only person on its “longlist” of potential candidates just two days after the sitting MP Mike Hill resigned.

Left wing party members said the move denied many other party members the opportunity to be Labour’s candidate.

The Tories hope they can take Hartlepool as

the latest so-called “red wall” constituency in the north and Midlands lost by Labour.

Labour leader Keir Starmer is convinced that right wing politics is the way to win back support. But the Labour right is already preparing its excuses.

Alex Cunningham, MP for neighbouring Stockton North, said, “Keir was elected leader just over a year ago in very, very difficult circumstances, so I don’t think we can judge Keir’s leadership on what happens in Hartlepool.”

Scottish lecturers strike after bosses ditch deal

by AN EIS MEMBER

EXTRAORDINARY events have rocked further education in Scotland in a national dispute over the replacement of lecturers by “instructors”.

We have seen what is perhaps a first in industrial relations. The EIS-Fela lecturers’ union accepted and ratified a proposal from the employers’ side, but the employers themselves promptly rejected it.

The employers said four things. They had no plan to replace lecturers, valued the work of all staff, would abide by agreements, and gave a definition of lecturing.

EIS negotiators accepted all these points, including the employers’ definition word for word.

Dismissing their own offer is a farce, but it shows their intentions. They did not dare to say it, but they do plan to replace lecturers, do not value them, and will not honour national agreements.

Above all, they don’t want a definition of lecturing.

Without that, they hope to get anyone on any old terms and conditions to stand in front of a class. It would mean education on the cheap and would cost students dear.

Furious

The shocking news of the employers’ reversal came out during the EIS-Fela annual conference.

Delegates were furious—and clear that the planned industrial action, which 90 percent voted for, would now go ahead on Thursday 25 March.

Forth Valley College, where management used fire and rehire tactics in a blatant example of replacing lecturers, had a very successful first strike on Wednesday last week.

Their combination of physical and virtual picketing will be copied by lecturers across Scotland.



EIS-FELA MEMBERS on strike in 2017

Bosses and royalty cash in on Tories’ furlough scheme bonanza

BILLIONAIRE TAX dodgers and other states have claimed millions of pounds from the Tories’ furlough scheme, an investigation has revealed.

Harrods and the Ritz hotel, owned by the Qatar sovereign wealth fund and ruler of Qatar’s brother in law, claimed almost £3 million in December 2020.

Tax exile and petrochemicals boss Jim Ratcliffe claimed up to £175,000 for two hotel businesses and a fashion company.

This is despite him having a net worth of over £12 billion. Other claimants include



Jim Ratcliffe dreams up ways to cash in

Saudi royals, the ruler of Dubai, Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, Tony Blair and golf courses owned by Donald Trump.

Millions of people who were facing job loss over the past year have relied on furlough.

But it was set up as a subsidy for bosses who wanted to avoid paying wages during lockdowns—meaning huge sums have gone to the super-rich.



What's your story?

Email with your ideas
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE

Forum calls for action for referendum

OVER 400 people joined the first online assembly of Now Scotland on Sunday.

Launched in February, it vows to be a grassroots campaign, independent of political parties, working to achieve Scottish independence as soon as possible.

Speaking at the opening session, co-convenor George Kerevan said, “For the first time in my lifetime, there is a majority who support independence”.

Keir McKechnie, from the organisation’s elected steering group, told Socialist Worker, “This was an encouraging event. People attending saw a real possibility that independence could get rid of the Tories and offered hope for real change.”

Infighting

The assembly took place against the backdrop of the 6 May Scottish elections and infighting within the Scottish National Party (SNP).

Keir said, “There was strong feeling that the movement has to move beyond the division in the SNP and work for action.”

Many speeches by attendees said their vision for independence is one that rejects the politics of austerity, war and failure around coronavirus.

They embraced a progressive vision against racism, sexism and other forms of oppression.

This means in order to mobilise support for independence, Now Scotland needs to work with anti-racist and environmental campaigns and take up working class issues.

Action

An indicative vote at the end of the event showed big support for a day of action across Scotland on 1 May—five days before the Scottish election.

Another one—backed by a large majority—approved a strategy of civil disobedience if Boris Johnson continues to block a referendum after the election.

Whatever happens in the May election, Now Scotland should call actions to exploit the Tories’ weakness and pressure the SNP to hold a referendum.

Hector Sierra and Bob Fotheringham

Join the Now Scotland trade union meeting, Saturday 27 March at 1pm. Go to Now Scotland trade union meeting Facebook page for details

FIGURE IT OUT

5 million pounds claimed by Virgin Atlantic, owned by a billionaire

2.5 million pounds has been claimed by Arcadia, owned by hated billionaire boss Philip Green

20 thousand pounds for two companies owned by Lord Ashcroft. He and his family are worth £1.2 million

IN BRIEF

Israel elections demonise Palestinians

ISRAEL HELD its fourth election in two years as Socialist Worker went to press.

The election was called after a coalition government led by warmonger Binyamin Netanyahu and rival Benny Gantz collapsed.

Netanyahu hopes to take credit for the vaccine rollout to most adult Israelis. His opponents want to get rid of him because he is corrupt.

But they all agree on the central issue in Israeli politics—the occupation of Palestinian land.

Netanyahu and his main rival in this election, Yair Lapid, both insist on complete control of Palestinians. Lapid has said he wouldn't allow Palestinians to have a state while they resist Israel's occupation.

The election is likely to be followed by weeks wrangling to form a coalition government. But any government that emerges will insist on continuing Israel's war on Palestinians.

Flooding follows drought in Australia

UP TO 18,000 people have evacuated their homes as floods battered New South Wales, Australia.

Torrential rainfall has caused dams and rivers to overflow and strong winds with abnormally high tides have made the flooding worse.

The floods are the worst in decades. Some areas remain completely isolated due to flooded roads.

New South Wales premier Gladys Berejiklian said, "Communities that were battered by the bushfires are now being battered by the floods and a deep drought prior to that."

"I don't know anytime in our state's history where we've had these extreme weather conditions in such quick succession in the middle of a pandemic."

This flooding comes not long after Australia was engulfed in bushfires.

Scientists are describing the frequency of the environmental crisis in the country as "the new normal".

Protests erupt following racist murders in the US

by SOPHIESQUIRE

THOUSANDS OF people have joined protests across the US and Canada to show their rage following the shooting of eight people in Atlanta, Georgia, six of whom were Asian women.

The protests have demanded an end to anti-Asian racism that has steadily been on the rise in the US since the outbreak of Covid-19.

Xiaojie Tan, Daoyou Feng, Soon C Park, Hyun J Grant, Suncha Kim, Yong Yue, Delaina Ashley Yaun and Paul Andre Michels were gunned down by Robert Aaron Long last Tuesday.

Elcius R Hernandez-Ortiz was also gravely injured in the shooting but survived.

Long targeted three massage parlours in the city, beginning at Tan's Cherokee County spa then Young's Asian Massage and finally Gold Massage Spa. He has been charged with eight counts of murder.

Those at protests this week have identified this horrific shooting as both a racist and sexist hate crime.

But the authorities have been slow to agree, with FBI Director Chris Wray initially saying that the shooting wasn't racially motivated.

At a protest in New York, demonstrator Yaine Dong said, "What happened in the past few days, it's really, really, really hits home for me as an Asian American woman."

"I'm here to fight against racism and sexism, and the intersection of those things that really plagues our daily lives."

Hundreds

In San Diego, California high school students organised a march that attracted hundreds.

One of the students who attended, Joan Chong, said that "racism is hurting real people in our community".

And at a protest in Pittsburgh one protester told the crowd, "Anti-Asian racism in the US may have spiked more since the start of Covid, but make no mistake—it's not new by any means."

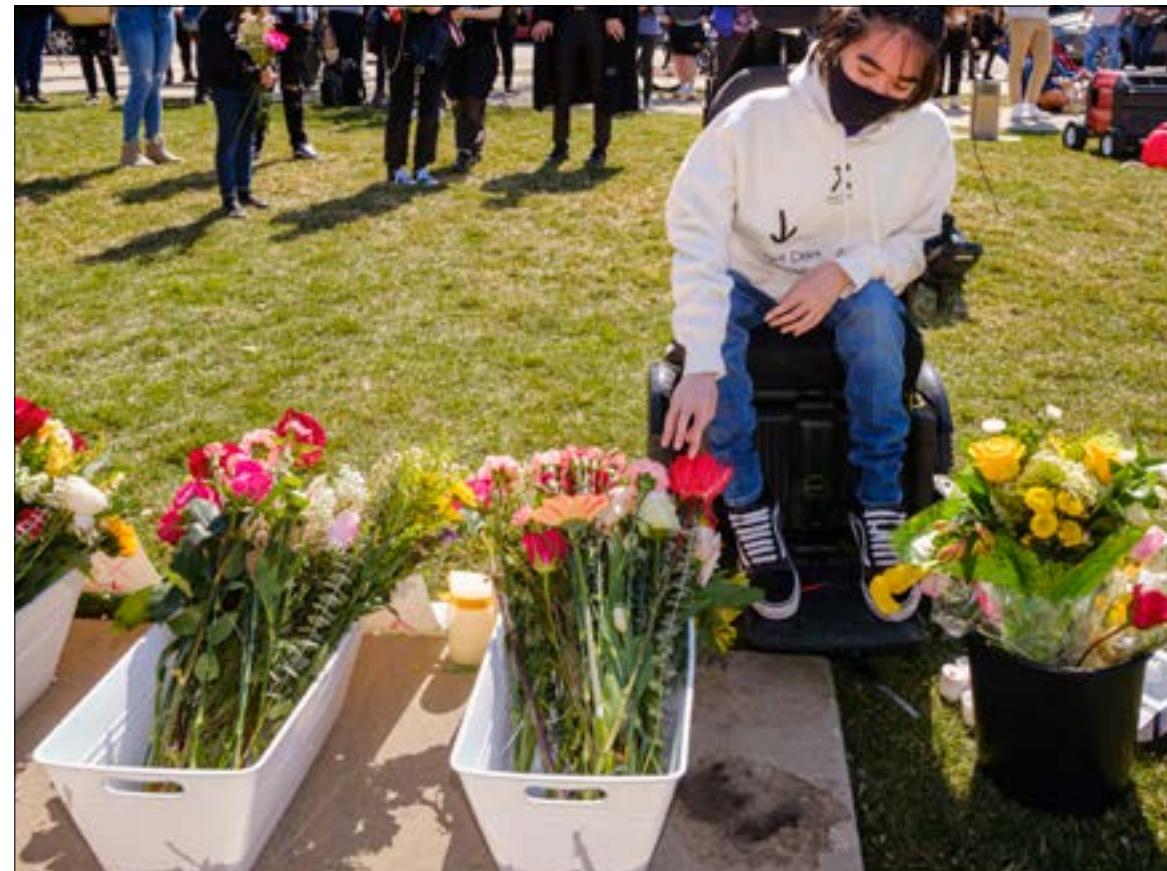
"Joe Biden likes to claim that anti-Asian racism is un-American, and I'm here to say that anti-Asian racism is in fact wholeheartedly American."

Protesters have drawn links between the shootings and the sharp rise in anti-Asian hate crimes since the pandemic started.

There have been 3,800 hate-related incidents against Asian people recorded.

And many more incidents are likely to have not been recorded.

This rise in hate has everything to do with those at the top of



A PROTESTER lays flowers at a memorial service in Des Moines, Iowa

PICTURE: JACK KURTZ/PA

Dutch elections signal scary shift to the right

by EWOUT VANDEN BERG

FOR A fourth time, the conservative People's Party for Freedom and Democracy have won the national election in Holland.

This time they gained 35 seats out of 150.

The neoliberal, yet culturally progressive, "Democrats 66" party won 23 seats. Together with the Christian Democratic Appeal who won 17 seats, they'll only need a small party to keep governing together.

The Greens lost seats and the PvdA social democratic party couldn't recover after it's four years in a power sharing government that implemented heavy taxes on social housing.

The Socialist Party's desperation to govern faced opposition from its youth wing. This resulted in the expulsion of members, ties cut with the youth wing and their seats declining to nine.

Horrifically, far right parties gained more seats in parliament

than ever before. One out of five voters opted for a far right party.

Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom, will probably remain the largest party in opposition. It campaigned for a "ministry of de-Islamisation".

Other racist parties gained 12 seats. They mobilised big rallies in most cities which escaped

Geert Wilders' party won 20 seats

opposition protests due to coronavirus restrictions.

Another party that entered parliament is BIJ1, an anti-racist group. Only opposition from the left with a focus on building movements can stop the far right from growing.



Spy cops don't make us any safer

IN RESPONSE to the brutal murder of Sarah Everard, Labour's Keir Starmer said that more police on our streets would make society safer for women.

Now we find out that the cops won't just be on the streets, but now in nightclubs and bars.

Termed Project Vigilant, it is probably more accurate to call it Project Voyeur.

It's an absurd kneejerk reaction to the kidnapping and murder of Everard, allegedly by one of their own officers.

To make matters worse, the police officers will be plain-clothed and undercover.

This gives certain police officers a perfect opportunity to abuse their cover to deceive women into inappropriate sexual encounters.

This would not be a first, it's happened before and been reported time and time again.

This is not to mention the effect this programme would have on black and Asian men.

They are already at far more risk of criminalisation or significant harm in encounters with police officers.

Black people are nine times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people.

To make society safer for women, we don't need more cops or surveillance.

We need to end the system that creates oppression and replace it with a world run by the masses.

Hope Ryan
Birmingham

Are we all millionaires?

THE BASIS of the article, There's no crisis for the rich (Socialist Worker, 3 March) was a report from Knight Frank which claimed that London now has nearly 875,000 dollar millionaires. But this is very misleading.

Knight Frank are "property consultants" and they include the roofs over our heads as "assets" in their calculations.

On that basis, the owners of many ex-council homes which happen to fall in prestigious postcodes will be categorised as millionaires.

It is absolutely true that



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

More strikes in Myanmar can beat back the military

AN ARTICLE in the bosses' Financial Times newspaper last week was headlined, "Protesters playing a dangerous game with the Myanmar economy, warn businesses".

It showed that strikes and protests are worrying the bosses.

That's something to be celebrated, especially when the death toll of protesters, gunned down by the Burmese military, has risen to over 200.

Strikes which cripple the economy are vital to overthrowing the military dictatorship and are potentially less dangerous than confronting the military on the streets.

Unsurprisingly, bosses claim that these strikes and the many demonstrations that are occurring are a "dangerous game," which

could reverse decades of economic gain. This is because they are worried about their profits.

In the past, these bosses were happy to go along with the military controlled sham democracy before the coup. They've turned a blind eye to human rights abuses.

Western governments have also been talking about "progress towards democracy" under the military constitution. This allowed the military to hold real power, even before the coup.

The concerns for the wellbeing of ordinary people, expressed by bosses and the United Nations are merely crocodile tears. Bosses and the so-called "international community" cannot be relied upon to liberate the people of Myanmar.

Railway workers, hospital workers, civil servants, garment

workers and bank workers have all joined the general strike, paralysing significant parts of the economy.

This action should be spread further.

Now is not the time to pause the strikes. In stepping up the action, workers' councils need to be formed, as they were in the general strike of 1988.

These workers' councils could then start to organise the distribution of food and services, creating the beginnings of a functioning parallel government controlled by workers.

Trade unionists in other countries should also make solidarity donations to help the workers of Myanmar.

Giles Ji Ungpakorn
Thai exile living in Aberdeen

Industrial revolution was built on blood

the rotten ruling class have exploited the pandemic to enrich themselves further.

But we should be careful to avoid such flawed notions of wealth—not least because they conceal the real basis of social class.

Ben Windsor,
South London

MERTHYR TYDFIL, South Wales, was one of the birthplaces of the Industrial Revolution.

The money used to start that revolution came from the slave trade—it was blood money.

In his book *Aspects Of British Black History*, Peter Fryer explained where the money for the initial investment in the Merthyr iron industry came from.

It was slavery—"The coal and iron industries of South Wales depended directly on the triangular trade for their initial funding".

In 1765 Anthony Bacon MP obtained a contract from the British

government to supply slaves to the islands of the Caribbean. Bacon was paid £67,000.

The money went straight into industrial development around Merthyr Tydfil, then a mere hamlet.

The workers in the Merthyr iron and coal industry laboured and lived in awful conditions. In 1831 the workers would rise up and they would briefly hold the town under the Red Flag.

This was the first time the red flag had been raised in a purely working class revolt. That is why we still call working class rebels, Reds.

Phil Knight
Neath, South Wales

Just a thought...

Now take to the streets

THERE ARE so many issues we must protest about—racism, sexism, the climate crisis, the way migrants and refugees are treated and more! I could go on and on. #ReclaimTheseStreets

Michelle
on Twitter

Defend right to protest

IF WE don't have the right to protest, we don't have anything.

All our freedoms have been won by protesting and strikes. We must resist home secretary Priti Patel and the authoritarian bill.

Joseph
on Twitter

Vigil smashed by Met police

THOUSANDS protested in Clapham Common despite being told they couldn't by the state.

The rotten Met police mashed up the demo and arrested women leading it.

Down with the police now and forever. I'm sure that if it were Britain First, the EDL or some other fascist outfit the policing would have been less violent.

Gerry
on Twitter

Where is the opposition?

WITH ENEMIES like Labour leader Keir Starmer, the Tories don't need friends.

They don't face any real opposition in parliament. The few good voices in Labour are let down by their own party.

We need a grassroots movement to get justice for the over 125,000 Covid-19 deaths. One solution—revolution!

Heather Booker
on Facebook

Our democracy is at stake

I DON'T think people realise how much of their democracy is being abused. The Tories are absolutely ruthless.

There must be a radical fightback against the Police Bill. I for one will fight and join with other socialists and workers to protest.

Lambski Garbett
on Facebook

It's been a year since Boris Johnson told Britain to "stay at home" on 23 March 2020. Sophie Squire and Sam Ord look at how that year has played out for workers—and how we have not been 'all in it together'

THE TORIES' murderous failure to contain coronavirus has officially caused the deaths of over 126,000 people in Britain. But the real figure will be far higher as the government doesn't count every death.

Over 4.2 million people have caught the virus as Tory failings let it rip through the country. Many are left suffering with long-term health problems.

Boris Johnson announced the first lockdown measures on 23 March, and they came into force on 26 March. Yet this was months after the Tories were first warned about the deadly dangers of Covid-19.

On 12 March he had callously announced, "Families are going to lose loved ones before their time"—but wasn't taking effective action to prevent it.

Millions have been forced to keep working during the "lockdowns", letting the virus continue to spread. The Tories have repeatedly claimed it is "safe" to send children back to schools and students back to colleges and universities.

They even bribed us to mix more in the summer with their "Eat Out to Help Out" scheme, designed to channel

more profits to the bosses. No wonder Britain became the worst affected country in Europe and one of the worst in the world.

And while Johnson and the Tories peddled the lie that "we are all in this together", workers were hit hard.

Health staff were pushed to breaking point in their efforts to control the spread of the virus. Key workers such as bus drivers and supermarket staff have been put at unnecessary risk.

More broadly bosses have used the virus as an excuse to cut workers' pay and force through worse conditions.

And that's just the experience of those still in a job. Millions more workers have been sacked or placed on furlough in the past year.

More than a third of all claims ever made for Universal Credit have been made during the pandemic. Nearly 700,000 more people were officially living in poverty as a result of coronavirus by last November.

The story of a year in lockdown is one of crisis, suffering and inequality, but it also contains a footnote.

Workers have in some cases refused to pay for this crisis—and their struggles have won some victories.

'Put at risk for profits'

COMPANIES HAVE made mind-boggling amounts of profit in the past year, despite lockdown restrictions. Amazon's total net sales in 2020 surpassed £270 billion. Net profit was up by 84 percent on the previous year.

Jeandre worked in an Amazon warehouse at the end of last year.

"I got the job because I was struggling to pay rent as a student," she told Socialist Worker. "And Amazon is becoming one of the easiest places to find work at."

"It was cramped in the first warehouse I was in. It was hard to remain socially distanced, especially when you moved past someone else."

Jeandre said that despite Amazon's massive profits, conditions for workers are constantly squeezed.

"Amazon warehouses are usually far away from everything," she explained. "I had to take two buses to get there every day."

"It cost £10 a day. That's an hour's worth of my wages. The company won't pay any travel expenses."

Travel problems pushed some workers to car share—increasing their risk of catching and spreading Covid-19.

Alicia, who works at supermarket Asda, described a similar situation with huge profits made at

workers' expense.

"At my store they've built a new cafe and restaurant as well as a Claire's accessories in the clothing section," she said.

"Billions are being spent on expanding. But nothing is going into our safety."

Alicia has worked at Asda throughout the pandemic.

"At the start of the lockdown the virus spread quickly while there were shortages of PPE," she said.

"Even now it's not safe. I work at a check out. We might be in a plastic box, but the supervisors and customers still get pretty close."

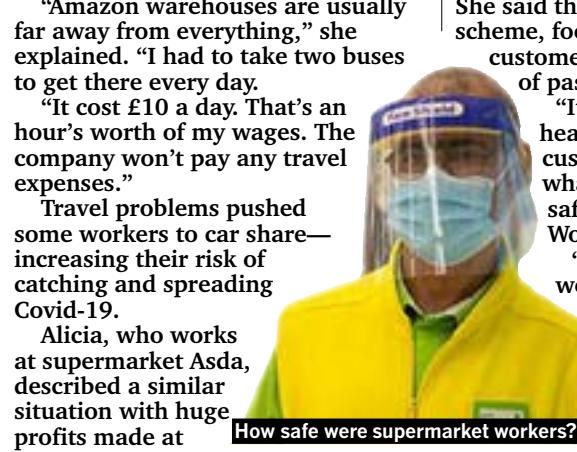
The Tories have helped make some workplaces more unsafe.

Kiki worked at fast food restaurant McDonald's when the Eat Out to Help Out scheme was introduced. She said that to qualify for the scheme, food had to be taken to customers in their seats—instead of passed over the counter.

"It went through my head when I was serving customers all the time that what I was doing wasn't safe" Kiki told Socialist Worker.

"Hundreds of people would pile into the store to get the discount. When there's that many people you question how much even a mask will protect me."

How safe were supermarket workers?



Amazon worker Jeandre was crammed into a warehouse too small to socially distance

'Virus shows it's socialism or barbarism' Michael Rosen

AUTHOR AND poet Michael Rosen was hospitalised after contracting coronavirus. He told Socialist Worker that the past year has shown up the horrors of a capitalist system.

"I was in an induced coma and in intensive care for 48 days," said Michael. "I've lost sight in one of my eyes and hearing in one of my ears. The virus has taken me over."

"This year has really exposed to us that our government made a calculation about just how many of us could be dispensed with in order to keep the status quo going. 'They've shown that they really didn't care about the old or the sick."

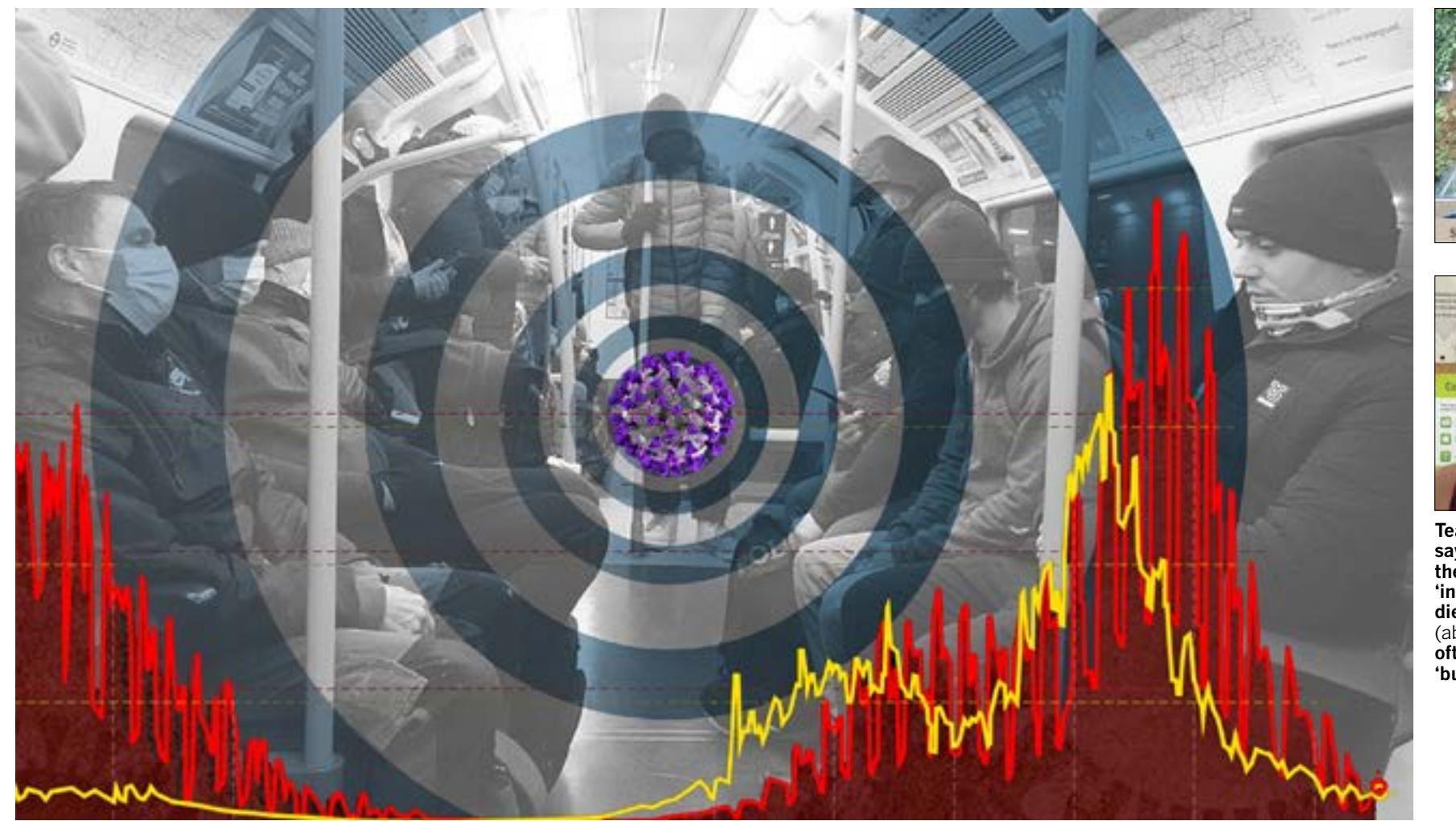
"As socialists we talk about socialism or barbarism and I've never seen it so naked as I see it now. "We saw people over 80 being decanted from hospitals into care homes to completely overrun them with the virus."

"It is hard to really tell how much collective suffering is going on. How much the virus has impacted us will only emerge later."

"But people are angry now, the whistle is being blown and there is a push for a public inquiry. So many will want to know why their loved ones had to die and the government just didn't care."



London Tube worker Phil says that the RMT union had to provide masks for staff at the beginning of the pandemic



Teacher Emma (top) says working during the pandemic has been 'intense'. While NHS dietician Katherine (above) says she has often felt exhausted and 'burnt out'

'At first, online teaching gave us a lot of freedom'

that she has found the last year particularly difficult.

"My children are quite young, so when lessons moved online they really struggled," said Ruthba. "I had to spoon feed them the information."

"My children aren't used to working on laptops at this age – online learning is new for them. It's a long technical process."

The pressure has affected parents' lives too.

"I wake up, get the kids ready, go to work, come home, clean, cook and wash," said Ruthba. "That's it, that's what it's like every day. There's no free time for a working parent like me."

But there has also been impressive resistance. "The fight to stop the unsafe return to schools has really highlighted the need for organisation," said Emma.

"Now more than ever workers are looking to their union."

Health service horror

YEARS OF privatisation before the pandemic meant crisis after crisis in the NHS during the last year—and workers paid the price.

Katherine, a dietician for the NHS, told Socialist Worker she has felt "exhausted" and "burnt out".

"The worst days were when so many workers were off sick, there were four on duty when there were meant to be ten," she said.

"We've still had to see everyone and it felt like we were being forced to cut corners. A lot of the time it has felt unsafe."

Katherine had to self-isolate in December for eight days after receiving

an instruction from the track and trace system. "It made me feel so guilty," she said.

"But then I thought, why should I have to feel guilty? I've worked my arse off and haven't been repaid."

Katherine described Tory calls to clap for the NHS as "patronising".

"When it was announced we'd only get a 1 percent pay rise, everyone in my workplace was so angry," she said.

"It is so important that everyone in the public sector isn't pitted against each other."

"Some of us are paid more than others, but we all have to fight for a pay rise."

'One of our workmates went into a coma'

IT BECAME mandatory for commuters to wear masks on public transport on 18 June. That was too late for the transport workers who had already died from the virus.

Bus drivers in London saw coronavirus rip through their workplaces. "Half of the drivers went down with Covid here," one bus driver told Socialist Worker.

"There was a driver who died just down the road from us. One of our other workmates went into a coma."

The driver, who works for bus company London United, said bosses had also increased drivers' hours "with no prior warning".

"Managers are saying the company is losing money," he said. "We don't accept that. The bosses make huge amounts of money year on year."

London United has also scored funding from Transport for London (TfL), but drivers don't see the benefits.

On the Tube, workers have fought

dangerous conditions that put their lives at risk.

"TfL didn't have hand sanitiser or gloves, and masks were provided by the RMT union," said Tube worker Phil.

"Workers were scared to be dealing with others up close. There was no strategy to stop non-essential travel – that worried us."

"We wanted the ticket barriers switched off to reduce contactless payments and only wanted one worker on the gates at a time."

Bosses agreed to these demands, although Phil said they quickly reversed the safety measures.

But it shows that transport workers can fight and win.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions. To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602

Socialist Workers Party online meetings

BIRMINGHAM Wed 10 Feb, 7pm 281-634-5938	BRISTOL Thu 11 Feb, 7.30pm 688-397-3148	871-7107-4592
BRADFORD Thu 11 Feb, 7pm 885 9187 7552	COVENTRY Wed 31 Mar, 7.30pm 823-945-1917	LONDON:HARINGEY Wed 31 Mar, 7.30pm 459-388-1576
BRIGHTON & HOVE Thu 11 Feb, 6.30pm 841 2142 3683	EDINBURGH Wed 31 Mar, 7.30pm 431-459-112	SHEFFIELD AND SOUTH YORKSHIRE Thu 1 Apr, 7pm 528-174-9278
	HASTINGS Thu 8 Apr, 6.30pm	WIGAN Thu 1 Apr, 7pm 872-5136-9540



Indian workers and farmers—mass revolt against Modi

BIRMINGHAM The Royal Family, racism and the state Wed 31 Mar, 7pm 281-634-5938	BURNLEY AND PENDLE When workers fight for our environment Wed 31 Mar, 7.30pm 446-409-5118	DEVON AND CORNWALL The Paris Commune of 1871—when workers were 'storming heaven' Thu 1 Apr, 7.30pm 865-2972-2883	KENT Decolonising education Thu 1 Apr, 8.15pm 434-623-8064	LONDON:WEST AND NORTHWEST Rosa Luxemburg at 150—why her ideas still matter today Thu 1 Apr, 7.30pm 870-9261-5131
BLACK COUNTRY, SHROPSHIRE AND STAFFORDSHIRE Soundtrack to the struggle Wed 31 Mar, 7.30pm 352-891-2411	CAMBRIDGE Is this democracy? Parliament, people and power Thu 1 Apr, 7.30pm 681-800-4408	DUNDEE, ABERDEEN & PERTH Capitalism, coronavirus and mental distress Wed 31 Mar, 7.30pm 894-2628-7708	LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE The Syrian revolution—ten years on Thu 1 Apr, 7pm 992-204-9372	LONDON:NEWHAM Covid, job losses and pay cuts—can unions lead the fightback? Wed 31 Mar, 7pm 288-098-8827
BRIGHTON AND HOVE Another education is possible Thu 1 Apr, 6.30pm 841-2142-3683	CARDIFF From Blair to Starmer—why won't Labour oppose the Tories? Wed 31 Mar, 7.30pm 630-181-4857	GLASGOW The Paris Commune of 1871—when workers were 'storming heaven' Thu 1 Apr, 6.30pm 851-5254-7239	LEEDS What's behind the coup in Myanmar? Thu 1 Apr, 7pm 881-4770-0676	LONDON:SOUTH Marxism and religion Wed 31 Mar, 7pm 497-196-1801
BRISTOL Here to stay, here to fight—Asian workers' struggles in Britain Thu 1 Apr, 7.30pm 688-397-3148	CHESTERFIELD The revolutionary life and ideas of Rosa Luxemburg at 150 Thu 1 Apr, 6.30pm 829-532-8731	HOME COUNTIES The lessons of the ANL—how do we fight for anti-racism today? Thu 1 Apr, 6.30pm 891-2900-7502	LIVERPOOL Rock Against Racism 40 years on—can culture fight oppression? Wed 31 Mar, 7pm 493-925-5919	LONDON:SOUTH EAST Alexei Navalny and the political crisis in Russia Thu 1 Apr, 7pm 529-913-6390
	COLCHESTER Covid, job losses and pay cuts—can unions lead the fightback? Thu 15 Apr, 7.30pm 894-7239-0044	HUDDERSFIELD Is Labour right to wave the Union Jack? Wed 31 Mar, 6.30pm 290-168-1804	LONDON:HACKNEY Is there a North/South divide? Thu 1 Apr, 7.30pm 798-534-2585	LONDON:TOWER HAMLETS The Paris Commune of 1871—when workers were 'storming heaven' Wed 31 Mar, 7.30pm 818-391-0420
			LONDON:ISLINGTON The Paris Commune of 1871—when workers were 'storming heaven' Wed 31 Mar, 7.30pm 543-023-057	OXFORD & THAMES VALLEY The Paris Commune of 1871—when workers were 'storming heaven' Wed 31 Mar, 7pm 861 2001 6477
				PORTSMOUTH Environment and the myths of overpopulation Wed 31 Mar, 7.30pm 488-934-2809
				SWANSEA AND WEST WALES Marxism, nationalism and the fight for socialism Thu 1 Apr, 7pm 902-964-963
				YORK AND SCARBOROUGH Paris Commune—when workers stormed heaven and women took the lead Wed 31 Mar, 7.30pm 827-489-7492

BOOKMARKS the socialist bookshop



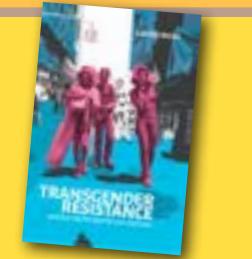
**The Labour Party—
a Marxist History**
by Tony Cliff, Donny Gluckstein
and Charlie Kimber, £14.99



**A Rebel's Guide to
Engels** by Camilla Royle
£4



**Does privilege explain
racism?** by Esme Choonara,
Ken Olende, Yuri Prasad
and Weyman Bennett, £3



Transgender Resistance
by Laura Miles
£10

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Ahoy, matey! Pirate series treasures truth of high seas

Gabby Thorpe urges Socialist Worker readers to get beyond this docudrama's corny characters and misshapen plots, and embrace their inner raider

WHEN YOU think of pirates, you think of skulls and crossbones. But Netflix's new docudrama *The Lost Pirate Kingdom* sheds new light on the society that the pirates of the eighteenth century built.

Schools and popular culture bombard us with images of pirates plundering treasure and drinking rum. But very little is said of the pirate republic of Nassau.

The Lost Pirate Kingdom uses sometimes overacted dramatisations and expert interviews to uncover the exploits of pirates. Riding on the popularity of Amazon's *Black Sails*, it is an eye-opening series.

Nassau was established as a "pirate republic" after Benjamin Hornigold arrived in 1713. He took refuge in the harbour and raided the ships of the Spanish ruling class.

He later established himself as leader. The pirates governed democratically—establishing the "first fully democratic republic".

For many in eighteenth century Britain, a life of piracy was an attractive prospect. Many who left the navy were abandoned by the British state and left in poverty.

Weakening

But the state was threatened by the increasing lawlessness of privateers. Piracy was soon made illegal, leading pirates to sail across the Caribbean in hopes of finding a new government.

Before long, Nassau grew into a large colony in the face of weakening British rule.

Nassau was governed on the principle that all men were equal. Anyone could captain their own ship,



THE REAL pirate tradition is revealed in this new Netflix series

From cultural appropriation to faux radicalism

MUSIC

SKETCHY
By Tune-Yards
Out now on 4AD records

THE RETURN of Tune-Yards was not inevitable.

Merill Garbus has spoken about confronting questions of cultural appropriation in her and collaborator Nate Brenner's work.

On breakthrough album *Whokill* (2011) and subsequent *Nikki-Nack* (2014) the African influences were to the fore in their brilliant use of syncopated percussion

and elements of Garbus's singing style. The song "Rocking Chair" was very problematic for its appropriation of an African woman's voice in a folk song style.

It appears that confronting these issues drove Tune-Yards to the point of collapse.

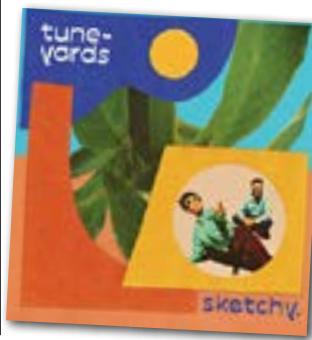
What emerged instead was an album in 2018 that tried to address their existential crisis directly.

The song "Colonizer" from that album is about Merill Garbus herself.

Garbus tells us elsewhere that she enrolled on a course at the East Bay Meditation

Centre to reflect on her role in a racist society.

The considerations around music are certainly rooted in the contradictions of Paul Simon's outstanding 1986 album *Gracelands*.



And so now we have this "post-crisis" album. On Sketchy, as on 2018's *I see you* creep into my private life, there is a clear musical break with the sounds we heard on *Whokill* and *Nikki-Nack*.

This plays more with 80s pop sounds. Garbus's singing talents are undeniable.

Tune-Yards' first album emerged in the wake of the 2008-9 financial crash. And the energy of their music and lyrics that have hinted at questioning power structures probably has made them seem more radical than they ever really were.

Looking back at *Whokill* for example, you're always left a bit unsure of what she's really trying to say.

This semi-radical evasiveness is probably one reason that Tune-Yards songs have been snapped up at various points by television show producers and adverts for cell phones alike.

And so it is with "Sketchy".

Garbus and Brenner's enjoyable and well-crafted compositions are ultimately let down by lyrics that are well "sketchy" in every sense of the word.

Alan Kenny

TELEVISION

DEUTSCHLAND 89

Written and directed by Anna Winger. Available to stream on All4

WHAT HAPPENS to the spy nests when the Berlin Wall collapses at the end of 1989?

And, what will replace Communism as the existential threat to Western civilisation?

This excellent drama, which began by looking back to "happier times" in 1983, is prepared to set itself big questions.

As the German Democratic Republic crumbles at a speed that no one could envisage, Martin, the reluctant East



Maria Schrader as Lenora

German agent, is sought by spy masters on all sides.

Meanwhile his aunt, the brilliant but morally suspect Lenora, is on the run to Romania.

The former spymaster arrives in Bucharest seeking refuge in one of Europe's last remaining bastions of Communism.

But soon the streets there are full of people demanding the overthrow of the regime.

As always in Deutschland, moments of humour are quickly followed by sorrow.

Watch this series for a ringside seat at the collapse of Stalinism—and more than a passing glance at the hubris of the West.

TOP 5 BOOKS

Bestsellers at Bookmarks, the socialist Bookshop

1 **Rebellious Daughters of History**
Judy Cox

2 **The Hammer and the Anvil**
Larissa Reisner

3 **Rebel's Guide to Orwell**
John Newsinger

4 **The Dialectics of Art**
John Molyneux

5 **Capitalism and the Politics of Food**
Amy Leather

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Working class women have a proud history of fighting for their rights, bringing women's liberation to the forefront of workers' movements and fighting in important class battles.

Huge social movements that have united women and men are where the biggest advances have been won by working class women.

This is what should give us hope today that we can smash sexism.

All the gains won in the past—from abortion rights, to the vote and the promise of equal pay—have been won through struggle and protest. None have been handed down easily from the top.

That's true of local battles, such as the Glasgow women's equal pay victory in 2017. It was based on the determination of women strikers, but a key moment was when mainly male bin workers struck unofficially in their support.

And it's true of the great battles where history hangs in the balance.

Fighting under the united banner of class and confronting and resisting the system through struggle breaks down the ruling ideas in society. It allows for new ways of organising.

Abortion rights is one example of the power of united class struggle. After abortion was decriminalised in Britain in 1967, socialists battled in their unions for the issue to be taken up.

THE Trade Union Congress eventually passed a motion in 1978 that committed to supporting abortion rights if they came under threat.

So when a bill in parliament was tabled to limit women's access to abortion in 1979 the TUC called a demonstration that saw 80,000 workers march—both women and men.

The force of this united movement meant the bill was dropped.

Trade unionist Angela Phillips who pushed for abortion protection within the TUC reported, "When we moved our resolution at the women's TUC there was no major opposition.

"This was because it was working class women who were most affected by the lack of safe abortions. They were the most likely to be forced to have backstreet abortions.

"The demo was huge. But there was a huge row about who should lead it, women or the TUC. Some feminists said that women were being usurped by male trade unionists.

"But by going through the unions we were reaching thousands of women."



PICTURE: GEOFF DEXTER

BIRMINGHAM CARE workers fought attacks on jobs and also confronted second-class treatment

TEAR OUT THE ROOTS OF SEXISM

United class struggle can undermine sexism and offer hope of liberation. But that doesn't mean sidelining the battle against oppression, writes Isabel Ringrose

Moments of revolution show the same pattern of the power of class unity, but at a much higher pitch.

Women were central to the revolution in Russia in 1917, in which they won huge gains for themselves and their class.

Under the former monarch, the Tsar, women were treated as property of their husbands. They suffered low and unequal pay and constant harassment.

Small numbers of working women were elected to some of the first Soviets—workers' councils—set up in the first revolution of 1905.

Ideas about the family and relations between women and men can change in struggle

Louise Michel

the day to demand change by going out on strike.

They called for support across the city. "Masses of militant women workers flooded the narrow street," one male worker in Petrograd said. "Those who noticed us began to wave their hands and shouted, 'Come on out! Down your tools!'

"Snowballs were thrown through windows. We decided to join the demonstration.

"The women workers greeted the workers with shouts of 'Hooyay!'"

THAT day 100,000 workers came out on strike demanding bread and an end to the war, and the movement sparked by women turned into a general strike. Five days later the Tsar was overthrown.

It wasn't until after the October revolution when workers took power that real changes to women's lives were proclaimed. Women won abortion rights, divorce on demand, equal pay and the vote.

Yet women were still spending an average of five hours a day on housework by 1919. Prejudice and discrimination remained.

So, because of women's pressure from below, measures were taken to free them from the home, such as communal canteens.

Ideas about the family and relations between women and men can change in the course of struggle.

This isn't to say that struggle automatically and permanently removes sexism, as seen in 19th century France.

The Paris Commune of 1871 saw workers briefly take power and create the first workers' government.

THE creation of the Commune came after a defeat of France's national government's attempt to secure 400 canons from the National Guard that was running the city.

Paris residents defended the streets and the army retreated. Women were central to this victory.

One eyewitness wrote, "The women led from the front. Those present on 18 March did not wait for their husbands. They encircled the guns and cried out to the gunners, 'This is shameful, what are you doing there?' The soldiers did not answer."

Before the national army attacked, Paris had been under siege from the Prussian army who invaded France. During the siege women were given the vital tasks of organizing provisions and fuel, which kept Paris running and politicised women.

Despite its brief existence of three months, the Commune enacted important changes.

This included waiver on rents, free public education and workers' takeover of abandoned factories.

But women had to fight to be able to participate equally in the new society.

Leading Communard Louise Michel reported women were "more capable than the men to say definitively that it has to be this way.

"Shorn of hate, of rage, of sympathy for either themselves or for others, they insist it has to be this way, even if it makes the heart bleed. That's what the women of the Commune were like," she said.

When the National Guard banned women from participating in battle the decision was met with widespread hostility, arguing this went against what the Commune was trying to build.

Women were also denied the right to vote in elections as many male Communards saw this as a disruption to women's role in society rather than building new rules.

THE German Revolution at the end of the First World War also saw united struggle win gains, with an ongoing battle for sexism to be fully eradicated.

It saw a huge wave of workers' strikes and soldiers' and sailors' mutinies. Armed workers patrolled the streets and workers' councils saw the possibility of an alternative way of living.

The united struggle between working women and men meant there was an opportunity to uproot capitalism. This forced myths about women's inability to play an equal part in society alongside men to be challenged.

As Gertrud Volcker, a socialist in the port city of Kiel wrote, "The fight for freedom, democracy, human dignity, social equality and solidarity became my own struggle."

Significant reforms were won quickly. In his 1917 Easter speech, German Emperor Wilhelm II had announced plans for democratic reforms in an attempt to consolidate his position.

But he didn't mention women at all.

Yet full voting rights for women on the same basis as men were gained within days of the workers' uprising of 1918-19.

READ MORE

• Marxism and Women's Liberation by Judith Orr £9.99

• Women's Voices from the Spanish Civil War by Sally Alexander and Jim Fyfry £16.99

Available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to bookmarksbookshop.co.uk



A new movement has brought to the fore questions about how we beat sexism.

Sadie Robinson argues liberation won't come through the current justice system

COULD HARSHER jail sentences and making harassment a crime keep women safer? Some people think so.

Following the killing of Sarah Everard women have felt able to share their experiences with harassment and violence.

Some say creating a specific crime of harassment of women would help.

Others also want longer sentences for existing crimes such as rape, sexual assault and domestic violence.

It's tempting to support the demands.

After all, short sentences for rape seem to send a message that women aren't worth protecting.

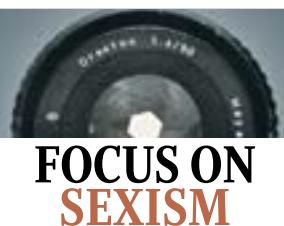
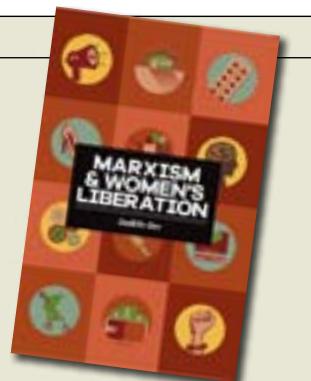
And if men can harass women without fear of arrest, surely that encourages them to carry on?

The new Tory policing bill would mean longer sentences for violent crimes and more police powers.

Yet even the government has admitted there is "limited evidence" that it will deter offenders long term or reduce overall crime".

Frances Cook of the Howard League for Penal Reform said the bill "does nothing to protect women from violence or abuse".

United class struggle is the key to undermining sexism. But within that struggle, there has to be specific agitation to tear down all forms of oppression.



Could longer sentences help to protect women?

WOMEN AT an angry demonstration against sexual harassment and domestic violence in Paris in 2019

problems rooted in the unequal, oppressive and violent world we live in.

In Britain, sentences have already increased.

More than two and a half times as many people were sentenced to ten years or more in 2018 than in 2006.

This hasn't stopped crime. And there is no link between the rate of imprisonment and recorded crime, according to the National Audit Office.

But there should be support and treatment for people to try and deal with their problems.

Resources
The cops won't use any extra powers to keep women safe. Police don't protect women because it isn't their job to do so, not because they lack resources or power.

They aren't there to fight crime but to protect a violent and oppressive system.

Giving them more powers will mean more bullying and harassment of ordinary people.

To get rid of violence against women for good, we have to uproot the system that causes it and create a socialist society.

That doesn't mean that we just wait for the revolution and put up with murder, violence and rape in the meantime. We must fight back against every instance of sexism in the here and now.

And we need more of the rage we have seen in the last two weeks.

But it does mean that we don't go along with measures that will make life for working class women even harder.

Breakthrough for Uber drivers, but issues remain

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

TAXI SERVICE Uber will now class its 70,000 drivers in Britain as workers with rights to the minimum wage, holiday pay and pensions.

The corporate giant said drivers would earn at least the National Living Wage of £8.72 an hour.

But unions say bosses' guarantees still fall short of a Supreme Court ruling over drivers' employment status last month.

The court found that Uber drivers are workers, not self-employed because they face "subordination and dependency" to the company.

And bosses were forced to reclassify their drivers as workers from Wednesday after workers threatened to sue.

Reclassify

A statement from James Farrar and Yaseen Aslam of the ADCU union said, "The Supreme Court ruled that drivers are recognised as workers with entitlements to the minimum wage and holiday pay to accrue on working time from



TAKING ACTION was crucial—Uber strike in 2017

PICTURE: WAR ON WANT (FLICKR)

log-on to log off.

"Whereas Uber is committing only to these entitlements to accrue from time of trip to acceptance to drop off.

"While Uber undoubtedly has made progress here, we cannot accept anything less with full compliance with

legal minimums.

"We should see Uber make progress toward trade union recognition, a fair dismissals appeals process and data access agreement."

The state in this instance has intervened to push Uber to take up worker status but not because it is a champion

of workers' rights. Deutsche Bank has estimated that after granting drivers worker status Uber may have to pay almost £2 billion in backdated VAT.

And while this is still an important step in winning additional rights for workers, the fight for better conditions at Uber continues. Uber has

given an assurance that workers will now be paid the statutory minimum wage.

But they will only be paid this minimum wage for the time when a passenger is sitting in their vehicle, not for any waiting times.

The UPHD union said it "stills falls short" of the ruling "which clearly stated claimants were entitled to a guaranteed minimum wage from the moment they log into the app".

Promised

While bosses have promised £8.72 an hour after vehicle running costs, they haven't said how those costs would be calculated.

And compensation for backdated pay and holiday is still outstanding, with an ongoing legal case against the company.

The change also does not extend to the tens of thousands of food delivery drivers for Uber Eats.

The recognition of Uber drivers as workers is a victory for all those trapped in bogus self-employment.

But like most big businesses Uber's concessions to workers

don't come without benefits to the company.

Capitalists must constantly compete to beat their rivals and new app-based taxi services like Bolt and Lyft are pushing Uber to scramble to find new ways to stay on top.

An article written by Uber chief executive wrote that "Many drivers work with several private-hire operators at the same time.

"It makes no sense that they should enjoy the protections of worker status on one trip but lose them on the next."

It is clear Uber wants to position itself as the company that looks like it treats workers better than the rest in the hope that they can make more profit.

But Uber doesn't care about its workers.

It has taken workers campaigning for half a decade and multiple court cases to get Uber to concede to even the smallest demands.

And the fight is far from over.

Workers are determined to fight for more—and action can win better pay and terms and conditions.

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Report finds the NHS has an institutional racism problem

by YURI PRASAD

 ASK people which British institution most embodies the ideas of multiculturalism and a great many will reply—the NHS.

It's not difficult to see why. Black and Asian health workers play a highly visible role running our hospitals, clinics and doctors' surgeries.

Black and minority ethnic (BME) people make up 21 percent of health service staff. That's some 273,359 people, a number not matched by any other industry.

The NHS's Workforce Race Equality Standard 2020 report shows that despite the proportion of BME staff rising year on year, the health service has a problem with racism.

For example, in 2019, white applicants were 1.61 times more likely than BME applicants to be appointed to a job from a shortlist.

That's worse than the last survey in 2017, when the figure was 1.46.

We can assume that the common stereotypes of black and Asian people having trouble "fitting in" and being worse communicators are having an effect.

Dr Nisha Aggarwal last month wrote a comment piece for the British Medical Journal which lifted the lid on casual racism in the NHS.

"After six long, tough years at medical school, I have found it painful to see colleagues, whose clinical practice is capable and safe,



NEARLY ONE in five nurses have experienced discrimination at work

judged by others as incompetent simply because they have a different accent," she said.

"I have even heard a white colleague declare that they struggle to remember the names of Asian doctors because 'they all look the

same'." The report also shows that people from a BME background are concentrated heavily in the lower pay bands, and are only rarely found in the ranks of senior management.

BME health workers are strongly

over-represented in "Band 5"—which includes most ward nurses.

But they are underrepresented in bands 6 to 9, which includes nurses who have specialised in particular clinical fields, and those who have taken on management

responsibilities, such as ward sisters and matrons.

For staff to progress through pay bands into higher paid roles requires the support of supervisors and managers.

But some 17 percent of nurses said they'd experienced discrimination from a manager or team leader, or other members of staff.

There are around 2,250 "very senior managers" in the NHS. Around 21 percent of NHS staff are from BME backgrounds, so that could equate to 450 black or Asian managers.

Number

But the actual number is just 153, showing the NHS is not concerned with tackling inequality.

Racist attitudes and practices that discriminate flow downwards from the top of the organisation.

And racism undermines ideas of solidarity and collective action because it makes black and Asian workers feel their concerns are separate from those of white colleagues.

We have to see the battle against racism in the health service as part of a wider battle against racism in society—and for a more democratic health service.

If change is to come, it will have to emerge from struggles at the bottom.

What's your story?

Email with your ideas
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

Care homes abused procedures for do not resuscitate orders

 SOME English care homes have imposed blanket "do not resuscitate" orders on residents during the pandemic—without their knowledge or consent.

A report from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) watchdog on Thursday looked at the scale of do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation (DNACPR) orders in care homes.

These orders mean that resuscitation would not be attempted if someone stopped breathing or if their heart stopped.

"In some cases, people were not always aware that a DNACPR decision was in place," said the report. "We heard evidence from people, their families and carers that there had been 'blanket' DNACPR decisions in place."

This is "potentially discriminatory and unlawful" under the Equality Act 2010.

The review heard about the



A 'concerning disregard for disabled people' was found in some homes

experiences of more than 750 people. Over 500 residents had been subject to a DNACPR order. But the real figure will be much higher, as most care providers didn't respond to the CQC survey.

A voluntary request was sent by the CQC to around 25,000 adult social care providers. It received

just 2,048 responses. The CQC's public survey found that 30 percent of people with a DNACPR in place hadn't been aware of it. Some 28 percent of relatives or carers also said they were not aware of the orders.

Some people felt conversations about whether they would want

to receive cardiopulmonary resuscitation "came out of the blue". "They were not given the time or information to fully understand what was happening," said the review.

There was also a "concerning disregard for disabled people". Blanket DNACPR orders were imposed on people with learning disabilities "who are not near the end of their lives".

And the number of people in nursing homes subject to the orders shot up after coronavirus hit last March.

In one care home, bosses imposed a DNACPR order on every resident over 80 who had dementia. The Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice group said this is "shocking and terrible".

Privatisation has created a fragmented care system with privately-run homes that are seen as businesses rather than a service.

Prioritising profit means cutting corners on training and has also driven down pay and conditions for workers, which then harms the quality of care.

The report said the "training and support" given to workers was a "key factor" in how residents are treated.

It didn't explicitly identify privatisation as a factor in the care people receive.

But it did say the "lack of consistent approach created challenges" for staff, confusion and more work.

Good practice "was not always rolled out" across local areas. "This meant there may have been missed opportunities to support the whole local population more effectively."

It could also mean "mistakes" that put people "at risk of unsafe care or treatment or neglect and harm".

Sadie Robinson

Health unions get serious in the battle to win higher pay

by YURI PRASAD

THERE ARE more signs this week that health unions are serious about fighting for decent pay.

The Tories quietly announced earlier this month they were recommending that NHS staff get only a 1 percent “pay rise” this year.

The ridiculous offer sent a wave of rage through the health service.

The nurses’ RCN union was first to respond, saying that it had prepared a giant strike fund and was ready to use it if members voted for industrial action.

Now, the massive Unison union is moving too.

It sent out a questionnaire this week to all of its hundreds of thousands of members who work in NHS in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The survey asked members two crucial questions.

First, were they prepared to take industrial action, short of strikes to achieve a pay rise of “at least” £2,000 a year? Second, were they prepared to take industrial action, including strikes?

Workplace

It also asked members if they were prepared to take part in workplace protests.

Unison is traditionally very slow to talk about health service strikes. But the mood of anger among workers has forced its hand.

Union leaders’ words about resistance need to be turned into action.

Strikes in the NHS could be extremely popular with the public.

People have seen how staff shortages have affected those working during the pandemic—and they know that better pay is the best way to fill vacant posts.

The news of Unison’s shift was warmly greeted at a 90-strong meeting of health workers organised by the People Before Profit group on Friday last week.

Matt, a nurse from Chesterfield, said that activists “should target colleagues who are still sitting on the fence about strikes—and those that disagree”.

He said that rather than putting patients at risk, striking would make them safer. “It will improve moral and staffing levels,” he said.

Karen, a nurse from Manchester, said, “We need protests outside A&Es, with staff holding posters over pay. We need cavalcades, banner drops, posters on the wards and joint union meetings.

“We have to create an atmosphere that says there is going to be a fight.”

Meanwhile, porters, cleaners, switchboard and catering workers

NHS WORKERS are furious with the Tories’ plan for a 1 percent pay rise and want their unions to act

BACK STORY

The biggest health service unions are talking up the prospects of strikes over pay

- The huge Unison union is surveying its NHS members on whether they are prepared to take industrial action—and whether they would strike
- The nurses’ RCN union had earlier announced it had set up a £35 million industrial action fund to fight over pay

at Cumberland infirmary plan more strikes in their long-running dispute over unsocial hours payments.

The 150 workers are employed by NHS subcontractor Mitie and struck earlier this month with Unison and GMB members picketing together.

They were set to strike for two days from Friday this week.

Porters at Heartlands hospital in Birmingham are also continuing their long-running fight against new contracts and rotas forced upon them.

The Unison union members there were also preparing to strike on Friday.



On other pages...

Crunch time in the British Gas fire and rehire dispute >>Page 20

Review into child sex abuse in football finds shocking ‘institutional failings’

A LACK of safeguarding in football allowed perpetrators of sexual abuse “to hide and use their positions to ruin the lives of many children”.

That’s the conclusion of the Independent Review into Child Sexual Abuse in Football 1970-2005 from Clive Sheldon QC.

It looked at abuse in football clubs and found that, for part of the time, “significant institutional failings” in the Football Association put children at risk.

The victims were often young boys from poorer backgrounds who abusers could “groom” by providing things they wouldn’t otherwise have.

Most survivors did not report the abuse for years. Many described feelings of shame, confusion and fear of letting their parents down. Others felt pressure to keep quiet because to do otherwise would wreck their football careers.

One survivor said his abuse “went on for years, from the age of 11 up to 17”.

“It was systematic,” he said.

“People ask why I didn’t speak out sooner. It’s because the desire is immense to be a footballer, and the power that they had over us, it was an unwritten rule, you cannot say a word.”

“I remember being with another boy who I knew had been abused. We could never speak about it, but I remember looking at him and our eyes met—we just said it with our eyes.”

The abuse has had a devastating impact on survivors’ lives and their families.

Excessive

Sheldon said survivors have endured “suicide attempts, excessive alcohol or drug intake or dependency, periods of depression and other mental illness, failed relationships with partners and children”.

“Some reported being unable to hug or kiss their own children,” he said.

The report found that clubs “did not facilitate, let alone encourage, young players to raise concerns”.

After reports of abuse in the mid-1990s, Sheldon said “the FA should have acted more quickly” to bring in safeguarding measures. Yet between October 1995 and May 2000 “the FA did not do enough to keep children safe”.

“The FA acted far too slowly to introduce appropriate and sufficient child protection measures, and to ensure that safeguarding was taken sufficiently seriously,” he said.

“There were no routes for young players to blow the whistle on their abusers.”

And even where abuse was reported, clubs failed to protect children. The report details cases where clubs “acted too slowly or inappropriately” in response to allegations.

Sometimes this was because officials “did not fully believe the allegation”.

One club was “almost certainly aware” that an abuser had been arrested for child abuse. But it “did not stand him down from his role at a nursery or feeder club pending his trial”.

BUSES

Bus drivers in revolt over pay and safety

by SAM ORD

OVER 400 workers at Go North West in Greater Manchester remain on all-out and indefinite strike.

They have been out since 28 February. At stake are bosses' plans to fire and rehire its bus drivers on vastly inferior terms and conditions.

The Unite union members are also outraged at the company's strike-breaking rogue service.

A union dossier detailed problems with the sub-contracted buses being operated by B and N Coaches, Connexions Buses, Edwards Coaches, Orion Travel, Red Rose, Selwyns, Swans, The Big Coach Company, The Travellers Choice and Tyrers Coaches.

Contract

Unite says, "The list of illegal activity was extensive and included overcrowding and ignoring reduced capacity rules to prevent Covid-19 transmissions."

Unite regional secretary Ritchie James said, "It is no surprise that Covid-19 rates in Greater Manchester,



MANCHESTER STRIKERS are standing firm

PICTURE: UNITE NORTH WEST

which were already high, are increasing when buses that have been flouting the transmission rules have been in constant operation."

Manchester mayor Andy Burnham should intervene to halt this dangerous operation.

Meanwhile, London United bus drivers in west and south London struck last Wednesday over attacks on pay.

Drivers in the Unite union face pay cuts of up to £2,500 a year. Management at the RATP operating company is

also threatening to introduce zero hour contracts.

David, a driver, at Park Royal, told Socialist Worker, "This pay cut comes at a time when they should be rewarding us.

Another worker added, "I just don't understand how a company that profited £15 million can turn around and offer us nothing.

Transport for London also gave London United extra money to deal with the pandemic. But the drivers haven't seen any of it."

Alongside this, RATP is pushing drivers to work longer hours for no extra pay.

"Management doesn't tell us that our hours will go up, they just do it," a picket said. "I worked a 12-hour shift yesterday and over 11 hours a couple of days before."

London United drivers were due to be joined on the picket lines by two other RATP subsidiaries, Quality Line and London Sovereign.

But action was postponed after a new pay offer.

TELECOM



Strikes involved virtual and actual pickets

PICTURE: CWU

Escalation at Openreach

ENGINEERS at BT Openreach have stepped up their fight against attacks on pay and conditions with a five-day strike.

The members of the CWU union are battling to stop BT bosses forcing them onto new contracts that will change the nature of the job.

The strike, which began last Thursday and was set to end on Wednesday of this week,

was the longest walkout of the dispute so far.

Bosses want to shift the workers—Repayment Project Engineers—onto a managerial grade.

The shift would remove union recognition, and mean worse pay and conditions for new starters.

BT has promised existing workers will keep their terms and conditions. But new starters would have far worse contracts.

CLEANERS

A victory at La Retraite

CLEANING WORKERS at the La Retraite Roman Catholic Girls' school in south London celebrated after strikes forced bosses to concede better pay and conditions.

The members of the UVW union—who are outsourced to Ecoclean—threatened action for "40 days and 40 nights".

They were demanding sick pay and enhanced safety measures.

The strike was called off after management conceded a 24 percent pay rise to workers as well as sick pay in line with teachers' rates.

The wages that were withheld from workers when they walked out over Covid-19 safety concerns using Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act will also be reimbursed.

This impressive fight led by migrant workers shows that bold action can result in massive gains.

FURTHER EDUCATION

Fight to stop victimisation

WORKERS AT Shrewsbury Colleges Group began a three-day strike on Tuesday in defence of victimised NEU union rep John Boken.

Bosses targeted John after he raised complaints about racism in the college.

The walkout this week follows four days of strikes to defend John.

He told Socialist Worker that the mood among workers is "solid".

"I had a panel meeting last week and, rather than sacking me, I got a final written warning," he said.

"We want the whole issue of gross misconduct to be dropped altogether."

●Messages of support to jean.evanson@neu.org.uk

■NEU UNION members in Greenwich, south east London, are voting on whether to strike to defend victimised union rep Kirstie Paton.

AIRPORT WORKERS

More action at Heathrow

THE UNITE union has announced 41 strikes at Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL).

It is a continuation of a bitter dispute following fire and rehire plans for the entire workforce. This will see pay and conditions slashed.

Strikes will begin on Friday 2 April and the latest round of action will see 41 strikes over 23 days, ending on Sunday 25 April.

The 4,000-strong workforce will see cuts of up to 25 percent of their earnings.

The wave of strikes will involve workers from engineering, airside operations, landside operations, fire service, security and other departments.

Each sector will strike for seven days, which is longer than originally planned by Unite.

The change follows a decision by HAL to not pay workers for a complete shift if the worker is on strike for any of that period.

HAL's chief executive John Holland admitted last month that despite recent losses the company still had £3.9 billion to see it through to 2023.

Unite general secretary Len McCluskey said fire and rehire "is ripping through our workplaces like a disease."

"Weak law lets bad bosses force through brutal changes to contracts, sometimes taking thousands of pounds off wages that families need to get by," he said.

Workers held their ninth day of strikes on 12 March.

UNITE UNION ROUND-UP

■WORKERS AT aerospace parts firm SPS Technologies in Leicester struck on Monday over fire and rehire cuts that will cost them up to £3,000 a year.

Around 200 Unite union members face reductions to overtime pay, sick pay and paid breaks.

They have already held two one-day strikes and planned another on Friday this week.

■BANK WORKERS at Communis in Edinburgh have voted for strikes over a pay freeze and the closure of a pension scheme.

Around 25 Unite union members voted for action by 75 percent on a 91 percent turnout. Strikes are set for 6, 12 and 19 April.

■UNITE UNION members at the Jacobs Douwe Egberts (JDE) site in Banbury, Oxfordshire, will be balloted for strikes over fire and rehire plans.

The plans will affect nearly 300 workers at the coffee factory, who have voted by 96 percent in a consultative ballot to hold a formal ballot.

JDE has issued notices of dismissal and engagement to 291 employees.

Proposed changes to the pension scheme will also introduce an "inferior" contribution scheme, which works at the mercy of the global stock market.

The strikes should start as soon as possible to grind down coffee bosses.

EDUCATION ROUND-UP

Hackney, Brighton and Uclan

STAFF AT Leaways Special school in Hackney, east London, were set to strike on Tuesday and Wednesday this week.

They are fighting for students' conditions and for the rights of teachers and support staff to organise. In addition two NEU union reps have been victimised and sacked. Staff struck on six days before Christmas.

●Messages of support to David.Davies@neu.org.uk, and sign and share the petition at bit.ly/LeawaysJaneBassett

■WORKERS AT Moulsecoomb primary school in Brighton were set to strike on Wednesday this week against it becoming an academy.

The action will involve NEU, Unison and GMB union members. In a ballot of parents run by the council 96 percent voted against the move to an academy.

■UCU UNION members at the University of Central

Lancashire were set for strikes on Thursday and Friday this week in a fight over compulsory redundancies.

●Tweet messages of support to @UCLanUCU

■UNION ACTIVISTS planned an online day of action to defend early years on Wednesday of this week.

Voices of workers will be live streamed by the NEU union between 6pm and 7pm, before a Twitter storm between 7pm and 8pm.

Use hashtags #FundEarlyYears and #SaveOurNurseries

■A NATIONAL consultative ballot over pay involving all UCU union further education members will take place from 19 April.

■UCU UNION members working for education provider Novus in England's prisons are balloting for strikes over coronavirus safety concerns.



BRITISH GAS strikers have been resilient throughout the action

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

CRUNCH TIME AT BRITISH GAS

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

THE CLOCK is ticking for British Gas workers on strike as the threat of being fired and rehired could become reality on 31 March.

That is the deadline day bosses have given to sign for a new, worse contract—or face the sack.

Adding to the pressure, the workers' GMB union recently told strikers, "If you plan to stay with British Gas after 31 March and intend to ultimately sign a new contract, our lawyers' advice is to do so by noon on 25 March if you want to avoid the loss of protected terms and changes you have fought for."

That scared and demoralised a section of strikers.

But there is no doubt workers are still ready to strike. They began another four-day strike on Friday. This will be strike days 35 to 38.

Around 7,000 workers have been taking regular action since January to

demand British Gas bosses scrap a plan to fire and rehire workers on worse terms and conditions.

Chris O'Shea—CEO of parent company Centrica who is masterminding the attacks—is already on a salary package worth nearly a million a year.

In addition, the GMB says O'Shea stands to scoop a £300,000 windfall.

His shareholding in British Gas now worth £1.2 million—is expected to increase if he succeeds in cutting the pay per job for British Gas engineers.

But bosses want workers to accept a pay cut of 15 percent and increased "flexibility".

Despite the pressure, some workers are openly saying they will refuse to sign the new contract.

Striker Matt told Socialist Worker that he won't give in to "constant bullying and harassment by senior management."

"I've never felt anything like the feelings you experience while on strike," he said.



British Gas picket line in Uddington, Scotland

Being on strike is like being on a rollercoaster with many highs and lows

"It really is like a rollercoaster with so many highs and lows. But we need to do this for all working people. It's become bigger than just us. It's for everyone."

"I won't be signing on 25 March, quite simply because we can't give in to bullies."

Pete is another striker who won't be signing on 25 March. He told Socialist Worker that he won't be "blackmailed" by the company.

"I can't bring myself to fold at the last minute," he said.

"I do feel guilty for taking this risk to my family but I just can't give in to blackmail after all we have sacrificed."

Kevin, a British Gas electrical engineer and union rep, told Socialist Worker that after the GMB email workers' morale was low.

"Many of us were feeling down after the email from GMB's legal team."

"But going back to the picket lines helped us discuss our next moves."

And Kevin made it clear that workers are still determined to continue.

"We've fought tooth and nail for this."

"If enough people don't sign British Gas might be concerned," he said.

Pete pointed out the strength of the workers throughout the dispute, "Our senior leaders have tried to divide us, blackmail us and set stressful deadlines, for months."

"It's been difficult, but we have stood shoulder to shoulder with one another."

And Matt added, "Together we are stronger and together we can win."

The strikes have clearly been driven by workers who have agitated and pushed to keep the action going.

Those at the top in the GMB national leadership have failed to provide leadership at a number of vital points.

Their latest news release says, "Those who don't agree to the new terms will be sacked."

Strikers need to tell unions bosses that instead of surrender they want escalation. There has to be an all-out strike to match bosses' ruthlessness.

Bosses everywhere will be watching what happens at British Gas. The resistance to the bosses needs full support from the unions.

On other pages
L Fight for NHS pay growing >>Page 18